Performance Audit of the King County Sheriff's Office

King County Auditor's Office
Liz DuBois, Principal Management Auditor
Nancy McDaniel, Senior Management Auditor
Bob Thomas, Principal Management Auditor
September 28, 2004

Audit Scope and Objectives

- Result of questions about the cost and extent of Sheriff's Office (KCSO) services, and its overtime management.

- Objectives: Evaluate KCSO's patrol staffing, overtime, and contract cost models to determine if they are appropriately designed and managed.
    - <u>Phase 1</u>: Unincorporated patrol staffing and overtime.
    - <u>Phase 2</u> (2005): Contract cost recovery model.

Background

- KCSO provides law enforcement services to approximately 580,000 county residents.
  - 61 percent unincorporated county
  - 39 percent in 13 contract cities
  - Additional non-municipal contracts

- Field Operations – Focus of this audit.
  - 50 percent of KCSO's budget and staffing
  - 2003 expenditures: approximately $50 million
  - Patrol Operations: Deputies who respond to 911 calls

Patrol Workload and Staffing Trends

- City incorporations and annexations have shifted patrol workload away from county.
  - Unincorporated workload (911 calls) declined by 12 percent between 1997 and 2003.
- KCSO took appropriate steps to respond:
  - Reduced unincorporated patrol staffing by 10 percent.
  - Implemented a contract service model that benefits both the county and cities.

Patrol Management

- Approach to patrol staffing is traditional, but has limitations.
  - Staffing plan based on officer safety and geography.
  - Not structured around objectives or workload levels that would help them answer questions:
    - What is a "safe" level of officer staffing?
    - Are patrol staffing levels appropriate to handle workload and meet operational goals?
    - Is Patrol Operations carrying out its responsibilities effectively?
  - Limits ability to know if staff resources are directed to where they are most needed, and when to adjust.

Patrol Management, cont.

- **KCSO is using cost-effective practices to manage patrol response to 911 calls:**
  - Prioritizing 911 calls and "cross-dispatching."
- **Community and Problem Oriented Policing**
  - More proactive approach shown to reduce crime.
    - Using analysis of crime data to focus patrol activity on chronic problems: locations, times, and repeat offenders.
  - Implementation has begun, but not consistently.
    - Policy direction in place, but not specific expectations.
    - Some practices are being carried out.

Patrol Overtime

- Management and oversight has improved.
- Overtime use has declined by eight percent.
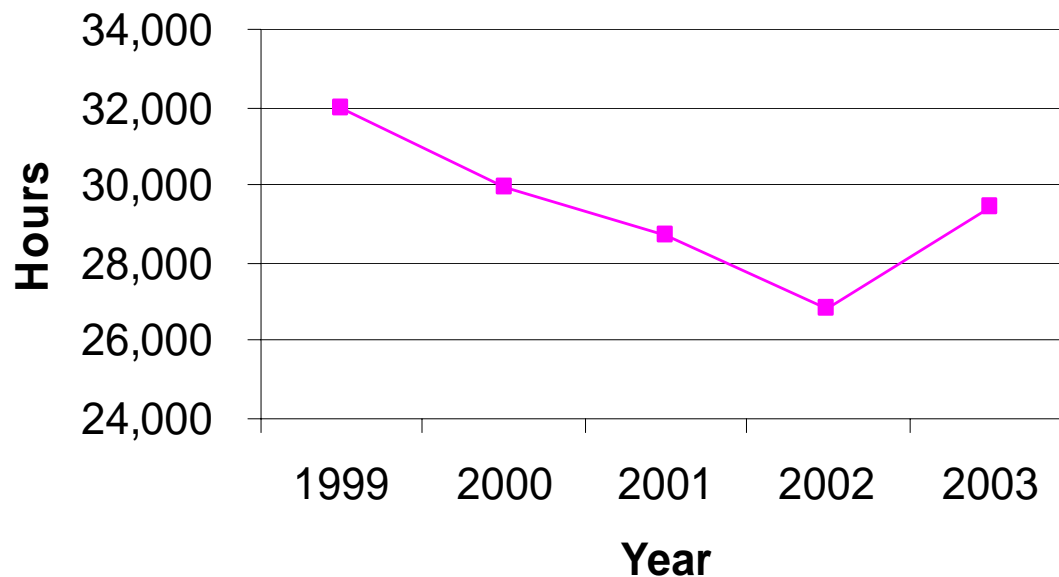
- Some tracking limitations still exist.

Patrol Overtime, cont.

- **Staffing coverage could be provided more cost-effectively.**
  - Staff and overtime levels based on past practices.
    - Overtime is less expensive than additional officers (no added costs for training, leave, patrol cars).
  - Comp time is more expensive; controls would reduce costs up to $120K annually.
  - Relief staffing could be more efficient.
    - Savings up to $500K, but logistical factors exist.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **More strategic patrol management would improve planning capabilities and cost-effectiveness.**
    - Consistent with broader need to provide strategic direction for all of its operations.

- **Summary of report recommendations:**
    - Establish objectives and measures for patrol operations and integrate them into staffing plan.
    - Strengthen overtime tracking methods and select a cost effective level of overtime and staffing.
    - Assess options for cost savings in comp time and relief management.

- **Sheriff's Office concurs or partially concurs.**

Acknowledgement

- We want to thank the management and staff of Field Operations and Technical Services for their cooperation and assistance.